(ii) Modernization and up gradation of post Offices with a view to give better services to customers.

(iii) Computerization and networking of post offices with a view to provide faster services to customers.

(iv) Implementation of Core Banking Services in Post Offices.

(v) Setting of Mail Business Centres in order to provide end-to-end solution to customers.

Better connectivity of North-Eastern Region

421. DR. JANARDHAN WAGHMARE: Will the Minister of DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of the fact that the North Eastern Region is not well-connected with the rest of the country;

(b) whether it has undertaken the work of constructing roads and new railway lines in that region; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) Yes Sir.

(c) **Road Connectivity**

Government has, *inter-alia*, approved the Special Accelerated Road Development Programme for North East (SARDP-NE) covering 9,713 km. roads in the region to be implemented under Phases A and B and the Arunachal Pradesh Package of Roads and Highways as detailed below:

(i) SARDP-NE Phase-A : Phase-A of SARDP-NE covers 2,569 km., out of which 1,415 km. has been approved for execution and balance 1,154 km. approved 'in-principle'. So far, Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for 977 km. at a cost of Rs.2,789 crore have been approved for execution under Phase-A of SARDP-NE.

(ii) SARDP-NE Phase-B : Phase-B of SARDP-NE covers 4825 km. which is approved for preparation of DPR.

(iii) Arunachal Pradesh Package of Roads and Highways: The Arunachal Pradesh Package of Roads and Highways covers 2,319 km. and has been approved for implementation at an estimated cost of Rs. 12,513 crore and Gross Budgetary Support (GBS) of Rs. 7,096 crore.

The construction of 678 km. stretch of the East West Corridor from Srirampur to Silchar in Assam is being undertaken by the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) at an approximate cost of about Rs.6,000 crore. Further, 706 km. of road stretches in the North East Region have been included under the National Highway Development Programme-III (NHDP-III) to be implemented on Built Operate Transfer (BOT) on toll basis.

Under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY), road connectivity in the rural areas has been taken up in all the eight States of North Eastern Region and special relaxation in programme specific norms and guidelines have been made to connect a large number of habitations particularly in hill/mountainous areas through cluster approach.

Rail Connectivity

Out of eight capital cities of North Eastern Region, only two are connected with rail network. Projects have been taken up for another four capital cities. The details of new rail line projects in the region are given in the Statement.

Statement

New rail line projects in NE Region

S.No.	Project	Kms.
1.	Agartala-Sabroom	110
2.	Azra-Byrnihat	30
3.	Bhairabi-Sairang	51.38
4.	Bogibeel bridge with linking lines between Dibrugarh and North Bank line	73
5.	Dimapur-Kohima (Zubza)	88
6.	Dudhnoi-Depa	15.5
7.	Harmuti-Itanagar	33
8.	Jiribam-Imphal Road (Tupul)	97.9
9.	Kumarghat-Agartala*	109
10.	New Maynaguri-Jogighopa	257

*Kumarghat-Agartala has been completed and commissioned.

Forest cover in the country

†422. DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:
SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that according to a survey report about 23 per cent land of the country is under the forest cover;

(b) if so, the area under dense forest in the country and such area in each State;

(c) whether it is a fact that this much percentage of forests is not sufficient to maintain proper balance of climate;